

**GUIDELINES GOVERNING
CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE
REGULATIONS ESTABLISHING STANDARDS
FOR ACCREDITING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA
(8 VAC 20-131-10 et. seq.)**

**Guidelines Governing Certain Provisions of the
Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia
(8 VAC 20-131-10 et. seq.)**

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-30.C. Remediation Recovery.

In kindergarten through grade eight, students may participate in a remediation recovery program as established by the Board in English (Reading, Literature and Research) and mathematics or both. In grades nine through twelve, the remediation recovery program shall include all retakes of end-of course SOL mathematics tests only. However, students in the ninth grade who are participants in a remediation recovery program may be retested on the eighth grade English (Reading, Literature, and Research) and mathematics SOL tests.

Guidelines:

Students in grades K-8 are not required to retake Standards of Learning (SOL) tests unless they are retained in grade and have not previously passed the test or they are placed in a remediation recovery program developed by the local school board. Students in high school are not required to retake end-of-course SOL tests unless the student previously failed the course and the test or the student needs to earn verified credit for graduation.

Remediation recovery is a voluntary program that schools may implement to encourage successful remediation of students who do not pass certain SOL tests in grades K-8 and high school mathematics. Remediation recovery programs are limited to grades K-8 English (Reading, Literature, and Research) and mathematics tests and high school mathematics only.

The Board of Education does not expect that every student who fails an SOL test be placed in a remediation recovery program. ***However, students who retake an SOL test must have participated in some form of remediation to be eligible to be retested under remediation recovery.*** Students in remediation recovery programs are expected to retake the applicable SOL test at the next regularly scheduled administration of the test and students may only be counted in remediation recovery once for one grade/SOL test. At the high school level, students may continue to retake end-of-course tests as many times as necessary to earn verified credit.

Placing a child in a remediation recovery program in English (Reading, Literature, and Research) and/or mathematics does not penalize a school if the student is not successful on the retake of an SOL test. Students who are successful on a retake of an SOL test are counted in the number of students passing a test but not in the number of students taking a test when calculating the passing rate for the school. As always, the scores of the student count at the school where the remediation and re-testing takes place. For example, a fifth-grade student fails the 5th grade mathematics test and is promoted to the 6th grade in a middle school. The student, who is remediated during the next school year, and who retakes and passes the 5th grade test, will count as a pass for the middle school. This would also be the case with a student who is promoted to

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the 9th grade, is retested on the 8th grade English (Reading, Literature, and Research) or mathematics test. For high school end-of-course tests, remediation recovery is only available in mathematics.

The following students may not be included in remediation recovery programs:

1. Students in grades K-8 who are retested because they were retained and had not previously passed a grade-level test in English (Reading, Literature, and Research) or mathematics.
2. Students who retake an end-of-course test as a result of failing and retaking a mathematics course at the high school.

Schools shall maintain evidence of a student's participation in a remediation recovery program along with the scores of any SOL tests taken following remediation in the student's record.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-50.A. Additional Local Graduation Requirements.

The requirements for a student to earn a diploma from a Virginia high school shall be those in effect when that student enters the ninth grade for the first time. Students may be awarded a diploma or certificate upon graduation from a Virginia high school.

When students below the ninth grade successfully complete courses offered for credit in grades nine through twelve, credit shall be counted toward meeting the standard units required for graduation provided the courses meet SOL content requirements or are equivalent in content and academic rigor as those courses offered at the secondary level. To earn a verified unit of credit for these courses, students must meet the requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-110.B.

The following requirements shall be the only requirements for a diploma, unless a local school board has prescribed additional requirements which have been approved by the Board. All additional requirements prescribed by local school boards, and in effect as of June 30, 1997, are approved to continue those requirements pending further action by the Board. The requirements for Certificates of Program Completion are developed by local school boards in accordance with the Standards of Quality.

Guidelines:

The Board of Education has prescribed that the requirements for graduation will be those in effect the first time a student enters the ninth grade. The requirements for graduation will be those in effect at the time the student would have been a first-time ninth grader for students who have earned sufficient credit in middle school or through other means prior to entering high school to be placed in a grade higher than the ninth when they enter high school for the first time.

The Board, in its 1997 version of the standards, grandfathered local requirements that exceeded those adopted by the Board on a year-to-year basis. Those grandfathered provisions were approved indefinitely with the adoption of revised standards on September 28, 2000. As a

result of the provisions in the revised regulations, those additional local requirements can remain in effect until such time as a local school board seeks to amend those requirements or action by the Board of Education.

In June 1999, the Board approved guidelines to govern the approval of additional requirements by local school boards that were not grandfathered by the 1997 version of the standards. Those guidelines, which will govern future approvals, are found in Attachment A of this document.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-50.D.5. Courses to Satisfy the Requirements in Mathematics, Science, and History and Social Science for the Modified Standard Diploma.

The footnotes in this section indicated that the Board of Education will approve courses to satisfy the requirements in mathematics, science, and History and Social Science for this diploma.

Guidelines: A listing of courses to satisfy these requirements is found in Attachment B of this document.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-50.D.4. and D.6. Literacy and Numeracy Requirements Assessments for the Modified Standard Diploma.

D. 4. Beginning with the ninth grade class of 2000-01, students pursuing the Modified Standard Diploma shall pass literacy and numeracy competency assessments prescribed by the Board.

D.6. The student must meet any additional criteria established by the Board.

Guidelines:

Beginning with the ninth-grade class of 2000-01, those students who pursue the Modified Standard Diploma shall be required to pass the 8th grade Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in both English (Reading, Literature, and Research) and mathematics to meet the literacy and numeracy requirements for this diploma. Students who are in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in the school year 2000-01 shall pass the Literacy Passport Tests (LPT) prescribed by the Board to meet the literacy and numeracy requirements for this diploma..

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-50.I.2. Board of Education Seals for Student Academic Achievement.

Students who complete the requirements for a Standard Diploma with an average grade of "A" will receive a Board of Education Seal on the diploma.

Guidelines:

This requirement is effective with the 9th grade class of 2000-01. Students who are 10th,
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11th, and 12th graders during the 2000-01 school year will be allowed to earn the Board of Education Seal under the requirements in effect prior to the recent adoption of the new requirements (i.e., "B" average).

The Board of Education's Career and Technical Education Seal will be awarded to students who earn a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma and complete a prescribed sequence of courses in a career and technical education concentration or specialization that they choose and maintain a "B" or better average in those courses; or (i) pass an examination in a career and technical education concentration or specialization that confers certification from a recognized industry, trade or professional association or (ii) acquire a professional license in that career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Board of Education's Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology will be awarded to students who earn either a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma and (i) satisfy all of the mathematics requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma (four units of credit including Algebra II; two verified units of credit) with a "B" average or better; and (ii) either (a) pass an examination in a career and technical education field that confers certification from a recognized industry, or trade or professional association; (b) acquire a professional license in a career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia; or (c) pass an examination approved by the Board that confers college-level credit in a technology or computer science area.

Guidelines:

Students seeking these seals must earn a diploma to be eligible for either or both of these. A list of examinations acceptable to satisfy the requirement of certification from a recognized industry, or trade or professional association has been approved separately. The approved list is found in Attachment C.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-60.G. Waivers of Verified Credit for Certain Transfer Students.

Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time after the first semester of their eleventh grade year must meet the requirements of subdivision F.1.c. or F.2.c. of this section. Students transferring after 20 instructional hours per course of their senior or twelfth grade year shall be given every opportunity to earn a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma. If it is not possible for the student to meet the requirements for a diploma, arrangements should be made for the student's previous school to award the diploma. If these arrangements cannot be made, a waiver of the verified unit of credit requirements may be available to the student. The Department of Education may grant such waivers upon request by the local school board in accordance with guidelines prescribed by the Board.

Guidelines:

Local school boards, through the division superintendent, may request waivers of the verified credit requirement for students subject to those requirements by providing a written request to the Department of Education no more than 90 days prior to the student's anticipated graduation date. The request for a waiver shall be accompanied by documentation that the student transferred from outside the state within a time frame that would not allow the student to meet the reduced verified credit provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-60.F. of the standards and what efforts had been made to comply with the standard. Such students should only be those who enter after the beginning of the second semester of the school year.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-110.B. Alternative Provisions for Awarding Verified Credit.

Upon the recommendation of the division superintendent and demonstration of mastery of course content and objectives, qualified students may receive a standard unit of credit and be permitted to sit for the relevant SOL test to earn a verified credit without having to meet the 140-clock-hour requirement.

Guidelines:

The division superintendent shall be responsible for identifying the manner in which students demonstrate mastery of course content and objectives for the purposes of this regulation. Documentation of such mastery shall be maintained in the student's permanent record.

The Board may from time to time approve additional tests for the purpose of awarding verified credit. Such additional tests, which enable students to earn verified units of credit, must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:

- 1. The test must be standardized and graded independently of the school or school division in which the test is given;*
- 2. The test must be knowledge-based;*
- 3. The test must be administered on a multistate or international basis; and*
- 4. To be counted in a specific academic area, the test must measure content that incorporates or exceeds the SOL content in the course for which verified credit is given.*

The Board will set the score that must be achieved to earn a verified unit of credit on the additional test options.

Guidelines:

The Board of Education has approved a list of tests acceptable as substitutes for end-of-course SOL tests and passing scores for those tests. The list of tests and passing scores is found in Attachment D of this document.

The Board will provide opportunities for students who meet criteria adopted by the Board to have an expedited retake of an end-of-course SOL test to earn verified credit.

Guidelines:

The Board of Education has approved the following criteria for students eligible for an expedited retake of an end-of-course SOL test:

The student must:

1. Need the test for verified credit, and
2. Have passed the course associated with the test, and
3. One of the following:
 - Failed the test by a narrow margin, or
 - Failed the test by any margin and have extenuating circumstances that would warrant retesting, or
 - Did not sit for the regularly scheduled test for legitimate reasons.

The “narrow margin” criterion shall be defined as a scaled score of 375-399. The division superintendent will be responsible for making the determination of what constitutes “extenuating circumstances” and “legitimate reasons” for the purposes of establishing eligibility for an expedited retest of an end-of-course SOL test.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-150.A. Alternative Schedules to the Standard School Year and Day.

The standard school year shall be 180 days. The standard school day for students in grades one through twelve shall average at least five and one-half hours, excluding breaks for meals, and a minimum of three hours for kindergarten. School divisions may develop alternative schedules for meeting these requirements as long as a minimum of 990 hours of instructional time is provided for grades one through twelve and 540 hours for kindergarten. Such alternative plans must be approved by the local school board and by the Board under guidelines established by the Board. No alternative plan which reduces the instructional time in the core academics shall be approved.

Guidelines:

The Code of Virginia, in ' 22.1-98 calls for a reduction in state aid if the length of the school term is less than 180 teaching days or 990 instructional hours in any school year unless authorization for less has been given by the Superintendent of Public Instruction with the approval of the Board of Education. Specific instructions for making up time lost due to inclement weather or other emergencies are provided in the statute.

By regulation, the regular school day must average at least five and one-half instructional hours (a minimum of three hours for kindergarten) and the standard school year must be a minimum of 990 instructional hours (a minimum of 540 instructional hours for kindergarten).

The Board of Education will consider requests from local school boards for alternatives to meet this requirement; however, no alternative that reduces the requirement will be

considered. Local school boards desiring to exceed the requirement are not required to seek the Board's approval unless exceeding the requirement would require approval to open prior to Labor Day. Pursuant to ' 22.1-79.1.B.3 of the Code, the Board is authorized to waive the requirement for specific schools in a school division that is providing its students with an experimental or innovative program which requires an earlier opening date than after Labor Day.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-280.C.2. Calculating Accreditation Ratings of Schools.

In a manner prescribed by the Board, the evaluation of the performance of schools shall take into consideration:

- a. The percentage of eligible students who achieve a passing score on the prescribed SOL tests or additional tests used for verified units of credit as outlined in 8 VAC 20-131-110.B.;*
- b. The percentage of students who pass the literacy and numeracy tests required for the Modified Standard Diploma;*
- c. The percentage of those students with disabilities whose IEPs specify their participation in alternate assessment who attain a proficient level score (beginning with the 2001-02 school year); and*
- d. The school's attainment of the provisional accreditation benchmarks as described in 8 VAC 20-131-320.*
- e. The number of students who successfully complete a remediation recovery program and subsequently pass SOL tests in English (Reading, Literature, and Research) and/or mathematics during any scheduled administration by the end of the following school year.*

Guidelines:

The passing rates on assessments administered in schools shall be calculated by dividing the total number of students in a school who pass the assessments (numerator) divided by the total number of students who take the assessments except that students who are re-tested and fail SOL tests in English and/or mathematics after participating in a remediation recovery program shall not be counted in the total number of students assessed.

In all cases, when calculating the accreditation ratings of schools, the performance of students on assessments shall be attributed to the school of record where the instruction takes place regardless of the grade level of the test(s) or the grade level of the student taking the test(s).

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-280.D. Waivers for Special Purpose Schools.

Special purpose schools such as regional, special education, alternative, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the Board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a

special purpose school with a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-50.

Guidelines:

Schools described in this section are those that serve as a student's school of principal enrollment and where students are reported in fall membership for the school. Fall membership determines whether or not these schools are subject to the provisions of the accrediting standards; therefore, schools reporting fall membership are subject to the provisions of the standards. These schools may or may not administer Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.

In accordance with the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-330 of the standards, local school boards may seek waivers of provisions of the standards to address the unique needs of these special purpose schools. Such requests may include an alternative accreditation plan. Applications must be submitted to the Board for consideration at least ninety days prior to August 1 of the school year. Requests for consideration must be accompanied by information that documents the need for approval of the request.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-280.F. and 8 VAC 20-131-290.B. Pre-accreditation Eligibility.

As a prerequisite to the awarding of an accreditation rating as defined in 8 VAC 20-131-300, each new or existing school shall document, in a manner prescribed by the Board, the following: (i) the division's promotion/retention policies developed in accordance with the requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-30, (ii) compliance with the requirements to offer courses that will allow students to complete the graduation requirements in 8 VAC 20-131-50, (iii) the ability to offer the instructional program prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-70 through 8VAC 20-131-100, (iv) the leadership and staffing requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-210 through 8 VAC 20-131-240, and (v) the facilities and safety provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-260. (8 VAC 20-131-280.F.)

The principal of each school and the division superintendent shall submit pre-accreditation eligibility reports in a manner prescribed by the Board to the Department of Education. Failure to submit the reports on time will constitute grounds for denying accreditation to the school. (8 VAC 20-131-290.B.)

Guidelines:

The Board of Education has adopted a self-certification process administered by the Office of Accreditation in the Division of Accountability for the purposes of collecting the information required by these regulations. The Office of Accreditation will report to the Board of Education any school not eligible for an accreditation rating based on a failure to comply with the pre-accreditation eligibility requirements of these sections.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-300.C.6. Application for a Rating of Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation.

Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation. A school that has never met the requirements to be rated Fully Accredited by end of the academic year ending in 2006

may apply to the Board for this accreditation designation. To be eligible, the school must meet the following criteria:

a. By the year ending in 2006, at least 70 percent of its students must have passed the applicable English SOL tests except at third and fifth grade where the requirement is 75 percent.

b. By the year ending in 2006, a combined pass rate of 60 percent of its students must have passed the SOL tests in the other three core academic areas.

c. In each academic area in which the pass rate is below the rate required to be rated Fully Accredited, the school's pass rate must have increased by at least 25 percentage points as compared to the pass rates on tests taken during the academic year ending in 1999.

To retain this rating, a school must continue to show annual improvement in each academic area in which the pass rate is below the rate required for full accreditation. This rating will cease to exist after the academic year ending in 2009.

Guidelines:

A school in jeopardy of being rated Accreditation Denied for the school year 2006-07 may, through the division superintendent and local school board, apply to the Board of Education for this rating. The request must be submitted no later than September 1 of the 2006-07 school year and the Board may award this rating for a period of up to two years or not longer than the 2008-09 school year. This rating will not be available to schools after the 2006-07 school year.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-310.A. and 8 VAC 20-131-340.A. Academic Review of Schools Rated Accredited with Warning (in specific academic area or areas).

With such funds as are appropriated by the General Assembly, the Department of Education shall develop a school academic review process and monitoring plan designed to assist schools rated as Accredited with Warning. All procedures and operations for the academic review process shall be approved and adopted by the Board. (8 VAC 20-131-310.A.)

Beginning with the 2000-01 school year, schools rated Accredited with Warning must undergo an academic review in accordance with guidelines adopted by the Board and prepare a school improvement plan as required by 8 VAC 20-131-310. (8 VAC 20-131-340.A.)

Guidelines:

Guidelines governing these provisions have been approved separately and are found in Attachment E of this document.

Standard 8 VAC 20-131-310.G.8. Improvement Plans for Schools Accredited with Warning.

G. The improvement plan shall include of the following:

1. A description of how the school will meet the provisional accreditation benchmarks, or

- the requirements to be Fully Accredited, for each of the years covered by the plan,*
- 2. Specific measures for achieving and documenting student academic improvement,*
 - 3. The amount of time in the school day devoted to instruction in the core academic areas,*
 - 4. Instructional practices designed to remediate students who have not been successful on SOL tests,*
 - 5. Intervention strategies designed to prevent further declines in student performance,*
 - 6. Staff development needed,*
 - 7. Strategies to involve and assist parents in raising their child's academic performance,*
 - 8. The need for flexibility or waivers to state or local regulations to meet the objectives of the plan, and*
 - 9. A description of the manner in which local, state, and federal funds are used to support the implementation of the components of this plan.*

As part of its approval of the school improvement plan, the Board may grant a local school board a waiver from the requirements of any regulations promulgated by the Board when such a waiver is available.

Proposed Guideline:

In accordance with the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-310.H., three-year school improvement plans developed by schools Accredited with Warning must be submitted to the Department no later than October 1 of the school year. If a local school board determines that waivers of state or local regulations are necessary to meet the goals and objectives of the plan, an application for a waiver must be submitted no later than June 1. This will allow the Board of Education to consider the waiver prior to the local school board's final approval and submission of the improvement plan to the Department.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-310.H. Improvement Plans for Schools Accredited with Warning.

The school improvement plan and related annual reports submitted to the Board shall provide documentation of the continuous efforts of the school to achieve the requirements to become rated Fully Accredited. The Board shall adopt and approve all policies and formats for the submission of annual reports under this section. The reports shall be due no later than October 1 of the school year.

Guidelines:

Guidelines governing these provisions will be approved separately and will be included in future versions of this document published by the Department of Education.

Standard: 8 VAC 20-131-325.C. Recognition of Schools to Receive the Governor's Award for Outstanding Improvement.

Schools may be eligible to receive the Governor's Award for Outstanding Improvement. This award will be given to schools in each classification defined in 8 VAC 20-131-280.B. rated below Fully Accredited that exceed the improvement levels defined in 8 VAC 20-131-320 by 10 percentage points or more in one year during the school years 2000-01 through 2002-03. In addition, any school that raises its rating from Accredited with Warning to Fully Accredited in one year will receive this award when it was 10 percentage points or more below the performance level to be rated Fully Accredited.

Guidelines:

The Department of Education shall provide the Board of Education annually during the period identified in the standard with a list of schools that have: 1) not met the requirements to be rated Fully Accredited but exceed the provisional accreditation benchmarks by at least ten percentage points; and/or 2) have improved the school's accreditation rating from Accredited with Warning (in specific area or areas) to Fully Accredited in one year. After the school year 2002-03, the Board, at its discretion, may recognize those schools that improve their status from Accredited with Warning to Fully Accredited at any time.

ATTACHMENT A

**GUIDANCE DOCUMENT RE REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL GRADUATION
CREDIT REQUIREMENTS AND REQUESTS TO ALLOCATE ELECTIVES
FROM LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS**

JUNE 25, 1998

Introduction

This document sets forth those elements of information and decision which the Virginia Board of Education (ABoard®) intends to consider in reviewing applications from local school divisions requesting local additions to the statewide credits for graduation set forth in the Standards of Accreditation. It also provides information and guidance of general applicability to the staff and the public to interpret and implement the SOA provisions on graduation credit requirements.

Statutory and Regulatory Background:

The Standards of Quality (ASOQ®), which are statutory, state in pertinent part:

Each local school board shall award diplomas to all secondary school students Y who earn the units of credit prescribed by the [Virginia] Board of Education Y and meet such other requirements as may be prescribed by the local school board and approved by the [Virginia] Board of Education ... Va. Code ' 22.1-253.13:4.C (emphasis added).

The Standards of Accreditation (ASOA®), which are regulations authorized by the SOQ and have the force of law, state in pertinent part:

To receive a high school diploma, a student shall Y meet the minimum requirements for one of the two diplomas outlined [in the SOA]. These shall be the only requirements for a diploma, except that a local school board may prescribe additional requirements for a diploma if such requirements have been approved by the [Virginia] Board of Education. All additional requirements prescribed by local school boards and in effect as of June 30, 1997, are approved to continue through June 30, 1999, without further action by the Board. 8 VAC 20-131-50 (emphases added).

Under the SOA adopted by the Board of Education in September 1997, the statewide minimum number of course credits required to receive the Standard Diploma is twenty-two (22); the statewide minimum number required to receive the Advanced Studies Diploma is twenty-four (24).

The SOA states that the graduation credit requirements for the two types of diplomas authorized in the SOA (Standard and Advanced Studies) are *minimum* requirements. By its terms, the SOA graduation requirements are a floor, not a ceiling.

The SOA is consistent with historical practice. For many years in Virginia, local school divisions have regularly added local graduation credit requirements to the statewide minimum requirements. According to a survey recently completed by the Virginia Department of Education, currently *forty-two* (42) local school divisions have additional local credit requirements to obtain the Standard Diploma and

thirty-five (35) local school divisions have additional local credit requirements to obtain the Advanced Studies Diploma.

Clearly, through the basic statute (the SOQ), the General Assembly and Governor have expressed their intent that local school divisions shall have some measure of flexibility to go beyond the minimum diploma requirements established by the Board in the SOA.

On the other hand, while both the SOQ and the SOA presume that the Board will approve *some* additional local graduation credit requirements, neither statute nor regulation gives local school divisions a blank check to add local credit requirements in whatever quantity and in any topic area they wish. If that had been the intent of the General Assembly and Governor, then the law would not give the Board the authority to approve local credit requirements.

In summary, neither the view that the SOA sets forth an absolute *maximum* number of graduation credits, beyond which local school divisions may not go under any circumstances, nor the opposite view that local school divisions can prescribe whatever additional local credit requirements they wish, is supported by Virginia law or historical practice. Both the SOQ and the SOA give the Board the authority and the duty to consider such local requests, which implicitly includes the authority and duty to approve some, but disapprove others.

The Board intends to act deliberately and cautiously, not arbitrarily, in considering such local requests. The purpose of this document is to give local school divisions, parents, students, and others advance notice and general guidance on how the Board will generally evaluate such local requests.

I. Local Additional Credits Required for Graduation

Observations and Considerations: The Board is most concerned and will act most cautiously in evaluating requests from local schools divisions for local additions to the Standard Diploma requirements. The Standard Diploma is the basic diploma offered in Virginia public schools. Students who are seeking an Advanced Studies Diploma may fall short of its requirements, yet still graduate from high school with a Standard Diploma. However, students who fail to meet the requirements for a Standard Diploma will suffer the consequences of obtaining no diploma at all.

Virginia has just embarked on a nationally-recognized, sweeping reform initiative that will raise expectations for students, parents, teachers, administrators, schools and local school divisions as never before. Many in the public education community stated repeatedly in commenting on the new SOA prior to its adoption last year that reforms on such a scale should not -- and could not -- be done too hastily and should be phased in over many years to give all concerned time to adapt and prepare for such fundamental changes. The Board listened to those comments and responded by adopting a gradual phased-in schedule of implementation in which the new SOA will not be entirely in effect until the 2006-2007 school year.

Following the same principle, while the Board encourages local efforts to raise student expectations and academic standards higher as our new reforms are gradually phased in, we believe that local school divisions should concentrate on improving student achievement in the core academic disciplines for which the new Standards of Learning (SOL) tests are given (passage of which will become a statewide graduation requirement beginning with the Class of 2004), before seeking numerous and wide-ranging additional local credit requirements for the Standard Diploma.

The Board is much more willing to give a greater degree of flexibility to local school divisions who wish to add local credit requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma, since students who fail to meet its requirements can still obtain the Standard Diploma.

A. *Standard Diploma*

Guidance:

1. Generally, the Board will approve requests from local school divisions to require up to two additional local credits to obtain the Standard Diploma (maximum of 24 required credits).

Generally, the Board will approve local requests for additional graduation credit requirements in the core discipline areas of the Standards of Learning (English, mathematics, science or history/social studies).

For example, a local request to add one additional credit requirement in history and one in science would generally be approved, because that would not exceed a total graduation credit requirement of 24 and those credits are in the core disciplines.

Requests for additional local credits in disciplines outside the core discipline areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but the Board will proceed cautiously for the reasons outlined above. In evaluating requests for additional local graduation credits outside the core discipline areas, the Board generally may consider, among other criteria, a local school division's graduation and drop-out rates and its students' performance on the SOL tests.

2. Generally, if requested by a local school division which has local additional credit requirements that were grandfathered until June 30, 1999 under the SOA provision cited above, the Board will extend approval for such local additional credit requirements until June 30, 2000.

B. *Advanced Studies Diploma*

Guidance:

Generally, the Board will approve requests from local school divisions for local additional credits required for the Advanced Studies Diploma above the 24 contained in the SOA if the credits are in the discipline areas of English, mathematics, science, history/social studies, fine arts (including performing arts) or practical arts (option), or foreign language. The Board will consider credits outside these disciplines on a case-by-case basis.

C. *Transfer Students*

Guidance:

Any local school division receiving approval to increase its course credit requirements may not deny either the Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma to any transfer student who has otherwise met the requirements contained in the SOA, if the transfer student can only meet

the division's requirements by taking a heavier than normal course load in any semester, by taking summer school, or by taking courses after the time when he or she otherwise would have graduated.

D. Prospective Application / Advance Notice

Guidance:

A local school division's additional credit requirements should apply only to students who have not yet entered high school at the time the additional credits are approved.

II. Allocation of Electives

Observations and Considerations: Some local school divisions have requested that they be allowed to allocate one or more of the SOA's elective credits for a prescribed credit, without raising the total number of credits required to graduate.

The current SOA set forth a 22-credit requirement for the Standard Diploma, of which 16 are prescribed and 6 are electives. For the Advanced Studies Diploma, the SOA requires 22 prescribed credits and 2 electives, for a total of 24.

In reality, however, the vast majority of Virginia students have far more opportunity to take electives than those contained in the SOA. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of local school divisions in Virginia are now on schedule configurations such as Ablock@that allow the student to earn eight credits per year, for a total opportunity of 32 credits in high school, plus any additional high school course credits that may have been earned in middle school.

More than one-fourth (27%) of Virginia local school divisions are on seven-period-day schedules, enabling the student to earn 28 credits in high school, plus credits towards graduation that may have been earned in middle school. One-tenth (10%) of local school divisions are on six-period-day schedules, enabling the student to earn 24 credits, plus credits towards graduation that may have been earned in middle school.

A student pursuing a Standard Diploma in a local school division on a block schedule has the opportunity to earn 32 credits in high school (plus credits earned in middle school), of which 16 are prescribed in the SOA and the rest are electives. While students in local school divisions on seven or six-period daily schedules have less opportunity for electives than the students in block schedules, nonetheless the Board believes there is ample room to allow local school divisions to allocate some elective credits as prescribed credits and still allow reasonable opportunity for student choice of other electives.

Guidance:

- 1. Generally, the Board will approve requests from local school divisions to allocate elective credits for local prescribed course requirements, while reducing the number of electives by an equal amount so that the total number of graduation credit requirements remains unchanged.**

For the Standard Diploma, generally the Board will approve allocations of electives to prescribed credits in the core discipline areas of English, mathematics, science, or history/social studies. Requests to allocate electives for prescribed credits outside of the core disciplines will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For the Advanced Studies Diploma, generally the Board will approve allocations of electives to prescribed credits in the discipline areas of English, mathematics, science, history/social studies, fine arts (including performing arts) or practical arts (option), or foreign language. Requests to allocate electives for prescribed credits outside of these disciplines will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Generally, in addition, a local school division may offer, as an option to students, the opportunity to pursue concentrated courses of study by taking related courses in a specialty area (for example, vocational education, fine or performing arts), or to choose to take a variety of elective courses. Offering such options shall not require Board approval so long as choosing a particular concentration of elective courses is not mandatory for graduation.

III. Requests for Different Types of Diplomas

Background and Considerations: The only two types of diplomas authorized in the SOA are the Standard and Advanced Studies Diplomas. The Board does not have the legal authority in the current SOA to create or authorize additional types of diplomas.

With the creative use of already existing authority to award diploma seals, however, including the newly-authorized Vocational Education Seal, and through the authority to create optional concentrated areas of study, local school divisions can achieve their objectives.

Guidance:

The Board will not approve the issuance of diplomas other than the Standard and Advanced Studies Diplomas.

Respectfully submitted to the Board:

*Mark Christie
Jennifer Byler*

0438922.02

ATTACHMENT B

Courses to Satisfy the Mathematics Graduation Requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma

| Mathematics Course Title | Course Code | SOL Test |
|---|-------------|----------|
| <i>Courses that will satisfy the mathematics requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma shall include content from among applications of algebra, geometry, personal finance, and statistics. Any of the following courses can be used to satisfy the mathematics content requirement.</i> | | |
| Personal Living and Finance+ | 3120 | None |
| <i>Courses at or above the level of Algebra</i> | | |
| Algebra I, 2-yr. Sequence, Part I* | 3131 | None |
| Algebra I, 2-yr. Sequence Part II | 3132 | ** |
| Algebra I | 3130 | ** |
| Geometry, 2-yr. Sequence, Part I* | 3144 | None |
| Geometry, 2-yr. Sequence, Part II | 3145 | ** |
| Geometry | 3143 | ** |
| Algebra/Geometry, 3-yr. Sequence, Course I | 3146 | *** |
| Algebra/Geometry, 3-yr. Sequence, Course II | 3147 | *** |
| Algebra/Geometry, 3-yr. Sequence, Course III | 3148 | *** |
| Algebra/Geometry/Algebra II, 3-yr. Sequence, Course I | 3151 | *** |
| Algebra/Geometry/Algebra II, 3-yr. Sequence, Course II | 3152 | *** |
| Algebra/Geometry/Algebra II, 3-yr. Sequence, Course III | 3153 | *** |
| <i>Courses above the level of Algebra and Geometry</i> | | |
| Algebra II | 3135 | ** |
| Computer Mathematics | 3184 | None |
| <i>Courses above the level of Algebra II</i> | | |
| Algebra II and Trigonometry | 3137 | ** |
| Trigonometry (one semester) | 3150 | None |
| Advanced Placement Computer Science | 3185 | None |
| Probability and Statistics | 3190 | None |
| Advanced Placement Statistics | 3192 | None |
| Discrete Mathematics | 3154 | None |
| Advanced Mathematics | 3160 | None |
| Mathematical Analysis/Pre-Calculus | 3162 | None |
| Elementary Mathematics Functions | 3163 | None |

Courses to Satisfy the Mathematics Graduation Requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma (Continued)

| Mathematics Course Title | Course Code | SOL Test |
|-----------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Advanced Placement Calculus | 3177 | None |
| Analytic Geometry | 3176 | None |
| Multivariate Calculus | 3178 | None |

+The personal living and finance course may not be used to satisfy the mathematics requirement for the Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma. This locally developed course must be based on the *Objectives for Personal Living and Finance* approved by the Board of Education in April, 1999: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Math/persfin.pdf>

* Students may earn one mathematics credit for the Modified Standard Diploma by successfully completing this course.

** Students who are enrolled in a course that requires an end-of-course SOL test must take the test, but they do not have to pass the SOL test to satisfy the requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma.

*** Students will take the Algebra I, Geometry, and/or Algebra II SOL test(s) when they have completed the appropriate SOL content, as determined by the local school division, but they do not have to pass the test(s) to satisfy the requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma.

Courses to Satisfy the Science Graduation Requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma

| Science Course Title | Course Code | SOL Test |
|---|-------------|----------|
| <i>Courses that will satisfy the science requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma shall include content from at least two of the following: applications of earth science, biology, chemistry, or physics.</i> | | |
| <i>Courses at or above the level of Earth Science</i> | | |
| Earth Science I, 2-Year Sequence, Part I* | 4200 | None |
| Earth Science I, 2-Year Sequence, Part II | 4201 | ** |
| Earth Science I | 4210 | ** |
| Earth Science II – Advanced Survey of Earth Science Topics | 4220 | *** |
| Advanced Placement Environmental Science | 4270 | *** |
| Earth Science II – Geology | 4240 | None |
| Earth Science II – Oceanography | 4250 | None |
| Earth Science II – Astronomy | 4260 | None |
| <i>Courses at or above the level of Biology</i> | | |
| Biology I, 2-Year Sequence, Part I* | 4300 | None |
| Biology I, 2-Year Sequence, Part II | 4301 | ** |
| Biology I | 4310 | ** |
| Biology II – Advanced Survey of Biology Topics | 4320 | *** |
| Advanced Placement Biology | 4370 | *** |
| Biology II – Anatomy/Physiology | 4330 | None |
| Biology II – Ecology | 4340 | None |
| Biology II - Genetics | 4350 | None |
| <i>Courses at or above the level of Chemistry</i> | | |
| Chemistry I, 2-Year Sequence, Part I* | 4400 | None |
| Chemistry I, 2-Year Sequence, Part II | 4401 | ** |
| Chemistry I | 4410 | ** |
| Advanced Placement Chemistry | 4470 | *** |
| Chemistry II | 4420 | None |
| <i>Courses at or above the level of Physics</i> | | |
| Physics I | 4510 | None |
| Advanced Placement Physics | 4570 | None |

Courses to Satisfy the Science Graduation Requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma (Continued)

| Science Course Title | Course Code | SOL Test |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|
| Physics II | 4520 | None |
| Principles of Technology I* | 9811 | None |
| Principles of Technology II | 9812 | None |
| <i>Integrated Sciences - Earth Sciences/Biology/Chemistry</i> | | |
| Integrated Science, 3-Year Sequence, Course 1 | 4211 | + |
| Integrated Science, 3-Year Sequence, Course 2 | 4311 | + |
| Integrated Science, 3-Year Sequence, Course 3 | 4411 | + |

* Students may earn one science credit towards the Modified Standard Diploma by successfully completing this course.

** Students who are enrolled in a course that requires an end-of-course SOL test must take the test, but they do not have to pass the SOL test to satisfy the requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma.

*** Students who have not already taken a course in this discipline where a SOL test is required will take the SOL test associated with this discipline, but they do not have to pass the test to satisfy the requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma.

+ Students will take the Earth Science, Biology, and Chemistry test(s) when they have completed the appropriate SOL content, as determined by the local school division, but they do not have to pass the test to satisfy the requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma.

Courses to Satisfy the History and Social Science Graduation Requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma

| History and Social Science Course Title | Course Code | SOL Test |
|---|-------------|----------|
| <i>Courses that will satisfy the history and social science requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma shall include one unit of credit in U.S. and Virginia History and one unit of credit in U.S. and Virginia Government.</i> | | |
| <i>Courses at or above the level of U.S. and Virginia History</i> | | |
| U.S. and Virginia History, 2-Year Sequence, Part I* | 2361 | None |
| U.S. and Virginia History, 2-Year Sequence, Part II | 2362 | ** |
| U.S. and Virginia History | 2360 | ** |
| American Civilization (must include the SOL for U.S. History) | 2376 | ** |
| Advanced Placement U.S. History | 2319 | ** |
| <i>Courses at or above the level of U.S. and Virginia Government</i> | | |
| U.S. and Virginia Government | 2440 | None |
| Advanced Placement Government and Politics: United States | 2445 | None |

* Students may earn one credit in U.S. and Virginia History for the Modified Standard Diploma by successfully completing this course. This course may be treated as a survey course of U.S. and Virginia History topics in the SOL.

** Students who are enrolled in a course that requires an end-of-course SOL test must take the test, but they do not have to pass the SOL test to satisfy the requirement for the Modified Standard Diploma.

ATTACHMENT C

Certifications for the Board of Education's Advanced Mathematics and Technology Seal

| Certification | Issuing Organization |
|---|--|
| A+ | CompTia |
| Access ACF Validated Graduate | American Culinary Federation, Inc. (ACF) |
| Accredited Legal Secretary (ALS) | National Association of Legal Secretaries (NALS) |
| Accredited Legal Secretary (ALS) | National Association of Legal Secretaries (NALS) |
| Air Conditioning Installation Technician | North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE) |
| Air Conditioning Service Technician | North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE) |
| Air Distribution Installation Technician | North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE) |
| Air Distribution Service Technician | North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE) |
| Architect for Java Technology Java 2 Platform | Sun Microsystems |
| AutoCAD | AutoDesk |
| Automotive Technician | National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) |
| Certified Dental Technician (CDT) | National Association for Dental Laboratories (NADL) |
| Certified Electronics Technician (CET) Associate | Electronics Technicians Association, International (ETA) |
| Certified Environmental Health Technician (CEHT) | National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) |
| Certified Hospitality Sales Professional (CHSP) | American Hotel and Motel Association (AH&MA) |
| Certified Hospitality Supervisor (CHS) | American Hotel and Motel Association (AH&MA) |
| Certified Internet Webmaster | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Application Developer | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster E-Commerce | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Enterprise Developer | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Internetworking Professional | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Security Professional | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Server Administrator | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Site Designer | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) | American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) |
| Certified Novell Administrator (CNA) | Novell |
| Certified Novell Engineer | Novell |
| Certified Satellite Installed and TV Receive Technician | Electronics Technicians Association, International (ETA) |
| Certified Travel Counselor (CTC) | Institute of Certified Travel Agents (ICTA) |
| Child Development Accreditation (CDA) | Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition |
| Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credential | Council for Professional Recognition |

Certifications for the Board of Education's Advanced Mathematics and Technology Seal

| | |
|---|--|
| Cisco Certified Networking Associate (CCNA) – Routing and Switching | Cisco Systems |
| Cisco Certified Networking Associate (CCNA) – WAN Switching | Cisco Systems |
| Collision Repair and Refinishing Technician | National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) |
| Computer Service Technician (CST) | Electronics Technicians Association, International (ETA) |
| Consumer Electronics Associate (CEA) | Electronics Technicians Association, International (ETA) |
| Culinary Arts (CHEFS) | American Culinary Federation (ACF) |
| Customer Service Specialist (CSS) | Electronics Technicians Association, International (ETA) |
| Damage Analysis and Estimating | National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) |
| Dental Assisting | Board of Nursing |
| Developer for Java Platform | Sun Microsystems |
| DocuTech | Xerox |
| Emergency Medical Technician | Department of Health, Office of Emergency Medical Services |
| Engine Machinist | National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) |
| Fiber Optics Installer Certification (FOIC) | Electronics Technicians Association, International (ETA) |
| Front Desk Agents | American Hotel and Motel Association (AH&MA) |
| Gas Furnace Installation Technician | North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE) |
| Gas Furnace Service Technician | North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE0) |
| Heat Pump Service Technician | North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE) |
| HVACR | Air Conditioning Refrigeration Institute (ARI) |
| i-Net+ | CompTIA |
| Medical Assisting | American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) |
| Microsoft Certified Database Administrator (MCDBA) | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Professional + Internet (MCP+1) | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Professional + Site Building (MCP+Site Building) | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Solution Developer (MCSD) | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) for Windows 2000 and Windows NT 4.0 | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer + Internet (MCSE+1) | Microsoft |

Certifications for the Board of Education's Advanced Mathematics and Technology Seal

| | |
|--|--|
| Microsoft Office User Specialist (MOUS) | Microsoft |
| National Certification in Plastics-Certified Operator Program | The Society of the Plastics Industry (SPI) |
| Network+ | CompTIA |
| Nurse Aide | Board of Nursing |
| Oil Furnace Installation Technician | North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE) |
| Oil Service Technician | North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE) |
| Oracle Application Developer | Oracle Corporation |
| Oracle DBA | Oracle Corporation |
| Parts Specialist – Automobile or Medium/Heavy Truck | National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) |
| Precision Machining Technology (NIMS – National Institute for Metalworking skills) | National Tool and Machining Association (NTMA) |
| Programmer for Java Platform | Sun Microsystems |
| ProStart | Hospitality Business Alliance |
| Registered Environmental Technician (RET) | National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) |
| Registered Hazardous Substance Specialist (RHSS) Certification | National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) |
| Registered Small-Dish Installer (RSDI) | Electronics Technicians Association, International (ETA) |
| Restaurant Servers | American Hotel and Motel Association (AH&MA) |
| Room Attendants | American Hotel and Motel Association (AH&MA) |
| School Bus Technician | National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) |
| Small Engine Repair (OPE – Outdoor Power Equipment) | Equipment and Engine Training Council |
| Surgical Technician (may be certified and/or licensed) | Accreditation Review Commission on Education for Surgical Technology |
| Technician Medium and Heavy Truck | National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) |
| Welding (SENSE – School Excelling through National Standards Education) | American Welding Society (AWS) |

Certifications for the Board of Education's Advanced Mathematics and Technology Seal

| Certification | Issuing Organization |
|---|--|
| A+ | CompTia |
| Architect for Java Technology Java 2 Platform | Sun Microsystems |
| Certified Internet Webmaster | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Application Developer | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster E-Commerce | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Enterprise Developer | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Internetworking Professional | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Security Professional | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Server Administrator | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Internet Webmaster Site Designer | CompTia/ProSoft |
| Certified Novell Administrator (CNA) | Novell |
| Certified Novell Engineer | Novell |
| Cisco Certified Networking Associate (CCNA) – Routing and Switching | Cisco Systems |
| Cisco Certified Networking Associate (CCNA) – WAN Switching | Cisco Systems |
| Computer Service Technician (CST) | Electronics Technicians Association, International (ETA) |
| Developer for Java Platform | Sun Microsystems |
| i-Net+ | CompTIA |
| Microsoft Certified Database Administrator (MCDBA) | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Professional + Internet (MCP+1) | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Professional + Site Building (MCP+Site Building) | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Solution Developer (MCSD) | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) for Windows 2000 and Windows NT 4.0 | Microsoft |
| Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer + Internet (MCSE+1) | Microsoft |
| Network+ | CompTIA |
| Oracle Application Developer | Oracle Corporation |
| Oracle DBA | Oracle Corporation |
| Programmer for Java Platform | Sun Microsystems |

ATTACHMENT D

Substitute Assessments for Standards of Learning End-of-Course Tests
Approved by the Board of Education

| | |
|---|---|
| ENGLISH | |
| SOL Test | Substitute Test(s) |
| English: Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP English Language & Composition • IB English (Higher Level) • SAT II Writing • Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) • Advanced Placement International English Language (APIEL) • IB English (Standard Level) |
| English: Reading, Literature and Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP Literature & Composition/Research Literature • IB English (Higher Level) • Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) • Advanced Placement International English Language (APIEL) • IB English (Standard Level) |
| MATHEMATICS | |
| SOL Test | Substitute Test(s) |
| Algebra I | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLEP College Algebra • IB Math Studies (Standard Level) • IB Math Methods (Standard Level) • SAT II Math IC • SAT II Math IIC • AP Calculus |
| Algebra II | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT II Math IC • SAT II Math IIC • IB Math Methods (Standard Level) • IB Math Studies (Standard Level) • AP Calculus |
| Geometry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |
| SCIENCE | |
| SOL Test | Substitute Test(s) |
| Earth Science | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |
| Biology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP Biology • SAT II Biology E & M • CLEP General Biology • IB Biology (Higher Level) • IB Biology (Standard Level) |
| Chemistry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP Chemistry • CLEP General Chemistry |

Substitute Assessments for Standards of Learning End-of-Course Tests
Approved by the Board of Education

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT II Chemistry • IB Chemistry (Higher Level) • IB Chemistry (Standard Level) |
| HISTORY and SOCIAL SCIENCES | |
| SOL Test | Substitute Test(s) |
| US History | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP US History • CLEP History of US I and II • SAT II American History • IB US History (Higher Level) |
| World History From 1000 AD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT II World History • AP World History • AP European History • IB History of Europe |
| World History to 1000 AD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT II World History |

ATTACHMENT E

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ACADEMIC REVIEWS OF SCHOOLS ACCREDITED WITH WARNING

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

A: Background and Purpose

For the school years ending in 2000 through 2003, schools meeting pre-accreditation criteria will be assigned one of the following ratings based upon student performance on Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, on approved substitute tests in the four core academic areas of English, mathematics, science, and history/social sciences, and on the level of performance of students with disabilities on alternate assessments:

- Fully Accredited;
- Provisionally Accredited/ Meets State Standards;
- Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement;
- Accredited with Warning (in specified academic area or areas); or
- Conditionally Accredited (for new schools as provided for by 8 VAC 20-131-300.A.1).

A school will be “Accredited with Warning (in specified academic area or areas)” if its pass rate on any SOL test is 20 or more percentage points below the provisional accreditation benchmarks established by the Board (8 VAC 20-131-300.C.4).

The *Standards of Quality* establish the base for providing assistance to schools accredited with warning. Standard 3 authorizes the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Education to provide technical assistance to schools, and assigns priority to those schools accredited with warning. Technical assistance is designed to focus on helping schools analyze relevant data and to help schools develop and implement corrective action plans (22.1-253.13:3).

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (SOA), effective as of September 28, 2000 state further:

“Beginning with the 2000-01 school year, schools rated Accredited with Warning must undergo an academic review in accordance with guidelines adopted by the Board ...” (8 VAC 20-131-340.A). It is the responsibility of the Department of Education to develop this academic review process (8 VAC 20-131-310.A).

Additionally, schools rated Accredited with Warning must develop and implement a three-year school improvement plan based upon the results of the academic review. The goal of the plan is for the school to attain full accreditation within three years (8 VAC 20-131-310.F). The school is required to report annually on its progress in implementing the plan to become fully accredited (8 VAC 20-131-310.H).

The purposes of the academic review are to assist schools in assessing factors affecting student performance and to provide the basis for the development of a three-year School Improvement Plan. The review results and suggestions for improvement planning may also be used to assist in selecting a proven instructional method in English and/or mathematics, as required by the SOA (8 VAC 20-131-310.B).

B. Academic Review Team

Two educators will serve on the Academic Review Team assigned to a school accredited with warning. One of the team members will be from the regional Governor's Best Practice Center or other Department of Education staff. Other team members will be educators meeting criteria established by the Department of Education. All educators serving on Academic Review Teams will have participated in a training program qualifying them to serve on such teams. Schools will be given the opportunity to confirm the members of the team and may, with good cause, request a substitution of a team member.

C. Academic Review Process

The Academic Review consists of three phases: preliminary review of documents, an on-site visit, and writing of the final report. Each of the phases is described below. When preliminarily reviewing documents and when conducting the on-site visit, data are collected in four areas. The four areas are:

- Curriculum alignment with the Standards of Learning (SOL);
- The use of time and scheduling in the school;
- The use of data in making instructional and planning decisions; and,
- Professional development offered to support instruction in the four core academic areas and student success on SOL tests.

The Academic Review Team will collect and analyze data using forms provided by the Department of Education.

Phase 1: Preliminary Review of Documents

Upon receiving their school review assignments, Academic Review Team members will use the Internet to download pertinent information about the school, and include, at a minimum, the SOL test results and School Performance Report Card.

Prior to the on-site visit, the school shall send required documents to the members of the Academic Review Team for their review. These documents are:

- Most current copy of the school's pre-accreditation eligibility report
- School profile
- Preliminary checklist completed by the central office and the principal
- Current school improvement plan
- Student/Parent handbook
- School calendar
- Description of the current year's proposed and planned staff development activities
- Daily bell schedule
- Master schedule

The Academic Review Team members will review these documents and begin formulating areas of strength and areas requiring further investigation. It is anticipated that this review of documents will take about one day.

Phase 2: On-site Visit

While on site, Academic Review Team members will collect additional data in three ways. They will conduct interviews, observe classrooms, and review documents.

Initial interviews are conducted with the principal and the superintendent/designee and with teachers. These interviews are well structured and are designed to give the Academic Review Team insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the school in the four areas listed above. Team members may conduct additional less structured interviews throughout the visit to help clarify information made available to them. To the extent possible, sources of information obtained during these interviews are kept confidential.

Team members will observe classrooms of those core areas in which the school is accredited with warning. The purpose of these observations is NOT to evaluate the teacher as instructor, but rather to gain more in-depth information about curriculum alignment and use of time. Data collection forms provided by the Department of Education specify the classroom observation data to be recorded and analyzed.

While on site, and depending on the amount of time available for the review, Academic Review Team members will review additional documents. These documents may include but will not be limited to:

- Earlier school improvement plans
- Test score analyses
- Other data analysis instruments
- Curriculum guides
- Mapping and pacing guides
- Lesson plans
- Samples of classroom assessments, including tests
- Minutes from faculty, departmental, grade level, school improvement team meetings

- Staff development program evaluations
- Surveys and survey results

Team members will compile the results of the data gathering process. They will confer on their findings in the four areas and prepare the preliminary report for the principal and superintendent. Team members then will conduct an exit interview with the principal, superintendent/designee, and others at the discretion of the principal. The purpose of this exit interview is to discuss with those present the preliminary findings of the Academic Review Team.

Prior to departing, the Academic Review Team will provide the school principal with a set of evaluation forms. These evaluations form will provide feedback on the Academic Review process and will be completed by those participating in interviews and classroom observations. Results of these evaluations will be analyzed and reported on by accreditation staff.

It is anticipated that the on-site visit will last one to three days. The length of the on-site visit will depend upon the number of areas in which the school is accredited with warning.

Phase 3: Preparation of the Final Report

The final report will consist of three parts- commendations, areas for improvement, and suggestions for improvement planning.

Academic Review Team members must agree on the content of the final report. The team leader will be responsible for typing a draft of the final report in the format provided by the Department of Education. This draft will be presented to and discussed with the school principal and superintendent during the exit interview. The principal will be given two business days to respond to the draft of the final report, and the Academic Review Team members may make changes to the draft based upon the principal's response.

The team leader will be responsible for completing the final report within five business days of the exit interview. Copies of the final report will be returned to the school, to the superintendent, to the regional Governor's Best Practice Center, and to the Office of Accreditation at the Department of Education.

The final report will become the basis of the school's three-year school improvement plan. The goal of the plan will be to have the school reach full accreditation status.

D. Roles and Responsibilities

For the Academic Review to work smoothly, those involved in the process have been assigned the following roles and responsibilities:

Division of Accountability Staff

1. Schedule Academic Reviews for schools "Accredited with Warning (in specific areas)."

*Guidelines for Conducting Academic
Reviews of Schools Accredited with Warning*

*E-4
01/18/01*

2. Identify Academic Review Team members for each school.
3. Notify Academic Review Team members of sites and dates of visits, providing them with appropriate administrative paperwork and Academic Review materials.
4. Notify the superintendent and the school of the upcoming review.
5. Request preliminary information and provide necessary forms for submitting the requested information to Academic Review Team members.
6. Set the date by which preliminary information must be provided to Academic Review Team members.
7. Provide technical assistance as needed throughout the Academic Review process.
8. Process the administrative forms for Academic Review Team members (travel, payment, etc.).
9. Follow the procedures for obtaining school improvement plans.
10. Analyze the results of the evaluation of the Academic Review process and recommend modifications based upon these results.

Academic Review Team Members

1. Make initial contact with the school to establish times for initial interviews and to confirm date for receipt of preliminary information.
2. Review the preliminary information about the school and begin data gathering/recording process.
3. Conduct the on-site review and continue to gather and record data.
4. Confer with the Division of Accountability staff as needed.
5. Develop the Academic Review Team draft report for discussion during exit interview.
6. Complete the Academic Review Team final report for the school principal, superintendent, Best Practice Center, and Department of Education within five days of the completion of the review
7. Submit all administrative paperwork to the Division of Accountability staff for processing.

School Principal

1. Confirm the review team members with Division of Accountability staff within one business day of receipt of notification of Academic Review.
2. Develop an internal work plan with the division superintendent regarding preliminary information, interviews, and document reviews
3. Supply preliminary information to the designated member of the Academic Review Team one week prior to the on-site visit.
4. Arrange for the availability of interviewees, for classroom observations, and for availability of appropriate documents.
5. Respond to the draft of the final report within two business days of the exit interview.
6. Complete an Academic Review Process Evaluation Form and return it to the Director of Accreditation within five business days of the review.
7. Establish procedures for developing and submitting the three-year school improvement plan based upon results of Academic Review and in accordance with SOA.

8. Establish the procedures for monitoring the implementation of the three-year plan and for reporting annually on the progress of the implementation, as required by the SOA.

SECTION II: AREAS OF REVIEW AND THEIR INDICATORS

By reviewing documents, conducting on-site interviews, and observing classrooms, Academic Review Team members will collect data related to the four following areas:

- Curriculum alignment with the Standards of Learning (SOL);
- The use of time and scheduling in the school;
- The use of data in making instructional and planning decisions; and
- Professional development opportunities to support instruction in the four core academic areas and student success on SOL tests.

Team members will look for indicators in each of the four areas, record their findings, and analyze the data they have collected. Results and recommendations in the final report will be based upon analyses of the data collected in these four areas.

The following sections provide a research background for the importance of each of the four areas identified above and describe the indicators team members will look for in documents, when observing classrooms, and when conducting interviews.

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT WITH THE STANDARDS OF LEARNING (SOL)

A. Research Base

Webb (1997) defines alignment as the degree to which expectations and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system in ensuring that students learn what they are expected to know and do. More specific to the academic review process and Virginia's education reform initiatives, alignment may be defined as follows:

A level of agreement between the local curriculum and the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) that ensures valid and accurate information about student performance in an academic content area when measured by the Standards of Learning tests.

Alignment of the local curriculum to the SOL should be further analyzed to determine the following (Webb, 1997 and Hansche, 1998):

- Comprehensiveness – reflection of the full range of the SOL in the local curriculum

- Emphasis – reflection on the different academic content areas in the SOL
- Depth – breadth of cognitive quality of the SOL
- Alignment to Performance Standards – where applicable, a narrative description of performance at each level and examples of student work from a representative sample of students that illustrate the full range of performance at a given level.
- Clarity and Transparency of Alignment – the alignment between the local curriculum and the SOL should be clearly described and understandable in documents designed for teachers, students, and parents.

An aligned, standards-based system has as its foundation, content standards. The system must be appropriate for all students who are English language learners, those who have disabilities, and those who have learning, processing and/or response styles that might be different from more traditional learning styles. In addition, when formal (SOL tests) and informal assessments (local) are aligned with standards, the critical question is whether the tests and other evaluation methods selected are measuring the same content (comprehensiveness, emphasis, depth, etc.,) for all learners (Hansche, 1998).

Content standards and assessments must be aligned so that what is taught is tested and what is tested is taught. Performance descriptors must be carefully written to reflect the content for which students are to be held accountable and must be used to guide the development and selection of test items. Alignment, therefore, is achieved through: 1) establishment of content - what students should know and be able to do (SOL); 2) a curriculum developed for each set of the broad content standards; and 3) systems of assessments (SOL tests and/or selected local assessments) created and matched with the content. In an aligned system, all content standards must be accounted for in some manner (Mitchell, 1996).

Statutory and Regulatory Authority:

The *Standards of Quality* (SOQ) require the Board of Education to establish educational objectives (known as the Standards of Learning or SOL) and to revise them periodically. Local school boards are also required to implement these objectives (SOL). The SOQ also authorize the Board of Education to provide assessments that determine the level of achievement of these objectives (SOL) by all students (22.1-253.13:1).

The accrediting standards require school divisions to develop educational objectives (curricula) based upon the SOL for students in grades K-12. Classroom instruction of the SOL must be designed to accommodate all students (8 VAC 20-131-70). Students must pass prescribed numbers of SOL tests to be eligible for Standard or Advanced Studies diplomas (8 VAC 20-131-50).

B. Indicators Used to Assess the Degree of Curriculum Alignment with the SOL

For each core area in which the school is rated “Accredited with Warning” the Academic Review Team will gather evidence of the following indicators:

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Curriculum Alignment

- Curriculum alignment reflects the use of the resource guides developed by the Department of Education in each of the four core academic areas.
- The curriculum reflects a reorganizing and reordering of the SOL to provide instruction that is logical, effective, and efficient.
- Pacing of the curriculum as it is taught reflects the SOL test blueprints and resource guides teachers in the use of time needed to teach concepts and skills in the SOL.
- Textbook and supplementary materials used are aligned with SOL and are referenced in the curriculum guides.
- Curricula are aligned with the SOL content and processes at each grade level in the school.
- Curricula are aligned vertically, including grade levels not in the building.
- Teacher use of curriculum guides is monitored periodically throughout the school year.
- Pacing of curriculum taught is monitored periodically throughout the school year.
- Adjustments to curriculum are made, based upon results of monitoring and SOL test data.

Classroom Instruction

- Objectives in teachers' lesson plans relate to SOL content.
- Classroom instruction focuses on teaching objectives related to SOL content.
- Instruction is paced to meet the needs of students and to ensure the teaching of content and skills within appropriate timeframes.
- Resources are available to support instruction of SOL.
- Supplementary materials used correlate with SOL content.
- Individual teachers use a variety of teaching methods.
- A research-based instructional program is in place that correlates with SOL content and with teacher-developed learning objectives.
- A system is in place for periodic and regular visits to classrooms, with feedback provided to teachers regarding use of time and adherence to curriculum guides/maps/pacing guides/research-based program protocols.
- Teachers use data to help plan instruction of objectives related to SOL content.

Assessment of Student Progress

- Assessments are aligned with objectives taught by the teacher.
- Assessments are aligned with SOL content and skills.
- Assessments require students to use knowledge, comprehension, application, and reasoning skills.
- Students are given opportunities to take writing tests and multiple choice tests that are similar in content and format to that of SOL tests.
- Student progress is assessed on a regular basis.
- A variety of assessment methods are used to measure student progress.

- Assessment results are used to plan instructional, remediation, and intervention strategies.
- A system is in place for periodic and regular monitoring of classroom assessments
- Student progress is reported periodically to parents.

THE USE OF TIME AND SCHOOL SCHEDULING PRACTICES

A. Research Base

When time in classrooms is spent on students being actively focused on learning objectives, students do better at mastering the subject matter (Cawelti, 1999). Fitzpatrick's (1998) research supports the use of instructional practices that increase time-on-task by actively engaging students in learning. Noninstructional time in classrooms should be kept to a minimum. Cotton (1995) suggests that classrooms be organized and managed to minimize disruptions, to keep transition time between activities short, and to establish routines for handling administrative matters.

In effective schools, operations are managed so that the maximum amount of time is allocated for learning. Unassigned time or time allocated for non-instructional activities is kept to a minimum (Cotton, 1995). Core academics are scheduled so that they are least likely to be interrupted by other school events (Fitzpatrick, 1998). Effective schools use alternative scheduling practices to maximize academic learning time, and they also provide instructional support outside of the regular school day to students needing it (Cotton, 2000).

Regulatory Authority:

Virginia's SOA reflect the importance of maintaining a school environment that maximizes its potential for instructional time. Principals are to protect academic instructional time from interruptions to the greatest extent possible, allowing the maximum time possible to be spent on teaching and learning (8 VAC 20-131-210.B). Teachers are expected to use that time effectively to provide educationally sound instruction (8 VAC 20-131-220).

Virginia's SOA prescribe the length of the school day, the length of the school year (8 VAC 20-131-150), and the number of clock hours of instruction that schools must provide in the various courses taught (8 VAC 20-131-80; 8 VAC 20-131-90; 8 VAC 20-131-100). The SOA also offer opportunities for schools to adjust their scheduling to meet these requirements in different ways.

B. Indicators for Use of Instructional Time and School Scheduling Practices

The Academic Review Team will gather evidence of the following indicators:

Instructional Time

- Instructional time is structured and has an academic focus.
- Instructional time is arranged to allow for a variety of instructional activities: whole group instruction; small group instruction; independent seatwork; and hands-on activities.
- Instructional time is efficiently used to implement specific instructional methods/programs.
- Instructional time is minimally interrupted by discipline issues, schoolwide announcements, early release or late arrival of students, other (list).
- Teachers have opportunities for planning and collaboration.
- Teacher planning time is used to focus on instructional issues.
- The effective use of instructional time in classrooms is regularly monitored.

School Scheduling Practices

- The school schedule meets SOA requirements for length of school year, length of school day, and number of hours of instruction in core areas.
- Time within the school day is allocated effectively and efficiently to meet academic needs of students.
- Nonacademic events minimally impact instructional time.
- The school schedule is conducive to providing intervention and remediation strategies within the school day.
- Resources are allocated to extend learning time beyond the regular school day.
- Alternate schedules used maximize availability of instructional time.

THE USE OF DATA FOR MAKING INSTRUCTIONAL AND PLANNING DECISIONS

A. Research Base

According to Joseph Juran, data is a body of information derived from prior activity, organized and studied to aid in the conduct of future activities. Data is the major resource for planning.

Tom Peters calls data the basis for measuring improvement, saying, “What gets measured gets done.” The continual collection of important data fuels improvement. A quality system of data collection, analysis of the data, and setting of goals drive positive change. The achievement of goals is kept in focus by the constant feedback of data.

Regulatory Authority:

8 VAC 20-131-20.4 of the SOA addresses the use of data in schools. It requires the school staff and community representatives to review annually the extent to which the school has met its prior goals and objectives, to analyze the school's student performance data including data by grade level or academic department as necessary, and to report these outcomes to the division

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superintendent and the community in accordance with local school board policy.

B. Indicators for Use of Data for Making Instructional and Planning Decisions

The Academic Review Team will gather evidence of the following indicators:

Instructional Decisions

- SOL test data are disaggregated by pass/fail rates; reporting categories; student categories (special education, limited English proficient, etc.); classrooms; ethnic group; gender.
- Results of data analyses are used to modify curriculum; plan instructional objectives, select appropriate instructional strategies; select appropriate teaching materials; plan for remediation and/or intervention.
- Staff received training in data analysis processes.
- Personnel have opportunities to work together to compile data from several sources, analyze data, and make instructional decisions based upon data analyses.

Planning Decisions

- Data from several sources are compiled and used for school improvement planning.
- Planning goals and objectives are based upon analyses of data.
- Data are used to evaluate effectiveness of plan implementation.
- Staff has received training in analyzing data to identify goals and objectives and to evaluate effectiveness of plan implementation.
- Data are analyzed longitudinally (over time).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION IN THE FOUR CORE ACADEMIC AREAS AND STUDENT SUCCESS ON SOL TESTS

A. Research Base

Not only does effective teaching require thorough knowledge of academic content, and mastery of a professional knowledge base of teaching strategies, but also requires effective counseling, and communication skills. Staff development should be an ongoing initiative that assists teachers in assessing the effects of their teaching on student performance. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) found that professional development strategies that succeed share several features. They tend to be:

- experiential, engaging teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, and observation that illuminate the processes of learning and development;
 - grounded in participants' questions, inquiry, and experimentation as well as profession-wide research;
 - collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators;

- connected to and derived from teachers' work with students as well as to examinations of subject matter and teaching methods;
- sustained and intensive, supported by modeling, coaching, and problem solving; and
- connected to other aspects of school change.

These approaches shift from old models of "teacher training" or "inservicing" to a model in which teachers confront research and theory directly, are regularly engaged in evaluating their practice, and use their colleagues for mutual assistance.

Regulatory Authority:

8 VAC 20-131-210 requires the principal to involve the staff of the school in identifying the types of staff development needed to improve student achievement and to ensure that staff members participate in those activities. Additionally the principal is required to provide needed staff development.

8 VAC 20-131-310 requires, for schools that are accredited with warning, the development of a school improvement plan that includes identification of a staff development plan.

B. Indicators for Professional Development Opportunities to Support Instruction in the Four Core Academic Areas and Student Success on SOL Tests

The Academic Review Team gathers evidence of the following indicators:

- Data are used to identify professional development activities that are sustained and focused on areas of need.
- A comprehensive professional development plan exists as part of the school improvement plan focusing on aspects of school change.
- Teachers have input into professional development activities and scheduling.
- Professional development activities are included on the school calendar as a sustained program.
- Professional development activities include peer modeling, coaching, and problem-solving.

SECTION III – LOCALLY-DEVELOPED ACADEMIC REVIEWS

The Board of Education will not waive the requirement of an academic review for schools accredited with warning. The Board may approve the use of locally-developed academic reviews upon the request of local school boards provided the locally-developed reviews meet or exceed the requirements for reviews conducted by the Department of Education as outlined in these guidelines. Individuals who conduct locally developed reviews may be employees of the local school division, may not be employees of the Department of Education, and their

qualifications must meet or exceed those of individuals who serve as independent contractors for the Department for the purpose of conducting academic reviews.

Requests for approval of locally developed reviews submitted to the Board must include, at a minimum, the following documentation:

- A listing of individuals who will conduct the review.
- The scope of the review.
- Dates of the review.
- Certification from the division superintendent that the review will meet or exceed the requirements for academic reviews adopted by the Board.

Requests for approval of locally developed reviews must be submitted to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who, by authority of the Board of Education, shall review and approve or disapprove those requests.

Upon completion of the locally-developed review, a final report shall be forwarded to the Superintendent of Public Instruction who shall, by the authority of the Board of Education, approve the final report and forward a copy of the report to the Office of Accreditation, Department of Education. The Superintendent may reject reports that are not acceptable and may require additional action by the local school division. The school shall comply with the remaining provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-310 of the accrediting standards.